



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913
PH (517) 373.5932 | FAX (517) 373.5944
www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/brown/

For Immediate Release
February 16, 2005

Contact: Jeanne Laimon
(517) 373-5932

Sen. Brown's bills to prevent spyware installation approved by Senate Technology and Energy Committee

LANSING – Legislation making it a crime to install software that tracks Internet users' activity without their consent passed a Senate committee Wednesday, announced state Sen. Cameron S. Brown, R-Fawn River Township.

Senate Bills 53, 54 and 151 were unanimously voted out of the Senate Committee on Technology and Energy. If signed into law, the bills would protect consumers from "spyware," which can monitor Web-based information and prompt pop-up advertisements.

Consumers often unknowingly agree to download spyware systems when they accept software licensing agreements while downloading software from the Internet. Deceptively installed spyware can hurt the performance and stability of computer systems and may even cause computers to crash. A survey conducted by Internet service provider America Online found that 80 percent of home computers are infected with some form of spyware.

"When someone logs on to a personal computer, there is a reasonable assumption their transactions will be made safely and privately, but this is often not the case," said Brown, who originally introduced the legislation last year. "Our right to privacy shouldn't be violated in our own home nor in our own home computer."

In addition to Brown, Knute Judsen, principal of ZCSS.com and a resident of Three Rivers, also testified in support of the legislation at the hearing. Judsen's company provides computer data and network security as well as general computer repair.

"Because no legal definition of spyware exists, a large amount of frequented sites on the Internet are using it," said Judsen. "With laws in place we could begin to eliminate the worst offenders through civil or even criminal prosecution."

Violators would be subject to either a misdemeanor or felony charge, depending on the severity of the violation, punishable by a fine of \$1,000 to \$10,000 or imprisonment for 93 days to four years.

Federal law makers are currently advancing similar legislation in the United States Congress.

SBs 53, 54 and 151 will now go before the full Senate for consideration.

###